



01 May 2011

Afghanistan Culture, Politics, Security: Short Reading List

Books

Thomas J. Barfield. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (2010)

Introduces readers to the bewildering diversity of tribal and ethnic groups in Afghanistan, explaining what unites them as Afghans despite the regional, cultural, and political differences that divide them. He shows how governing these peoples was relatively easy when power was concentrated in a small dynastic elite, but how this delicate political order broke down in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when Afghanistan's rulers mobilized rural militias to expel first the British and later the Soviets. Armed insurgency proved remarkably successful against the foreign occupiers, but it also undermined the Afghan government's authority and rendered the country ever more difficult to govern as time passed. Barfield vividly describes how Afghanistan's armed factions plunged the country into a civil war, giving rise to clerical rule by the Taliban and Afghanistan's isolation from the world.

Hafizullah Emadi. *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan* (2007)

An introduction to the land, people, economy, social stratification, and history as context for religion and religious thought; architecture, housing, and settlements; Afghan cooking and cuisine; family, women, and gender. A final chapter on Lifestyles, Media, and Education describes the urban vs. rural lifestyles, the state of communications, and the prospects for schooling post Taliban. A country map, glossary, resource guide, and photos complement the text.

Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace... One School at a Time* (2007)

In 1993 Greg Mortenson was the exhausted survivor of a failed attempt to ascend K2. After he was taken in and nursed back to health by the people of an impoverished Pakistani village, Mortenson promised to return one day and build them a school. In pursuit of his goal, Mortenson has survived kidnapping, fatwas issued by enraged mullahs, repeated death threats, and wrenching separations from his wife and children. But his success speaks for itself. At last count, his Central Asia Institute had built fifty-five schools.

Joel Hafvenstein. *Opium Season: A Year on the Afghan Frontier* (2009)

Hafvenstein didn't know what he was getting into when he signed up for a year in Afghanistan's rugged Helmand Province, the heart of the country's opium trade. He was running an American-funded aid program with two goals: to help tens of thousands of opium poppy farmers make a legal living, and to win hearts and minds away from the former Taliban government. The author and his friends were soon caught up in the deadly intrigues of Helmand's drug trafficking warlords. He found himself dodging Taliban in poppy-filled mountain ravines and arguing with bandits in police uniform. He saw both the stark beauty and the terrible cruelty that Afghans live with every day. At the height of his team's success, the Taliban attacked, killing his colleagues and destroying their work. These ambushes heralded a Taliban resurgence across the country.

Ann Jones. *Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan* (2006)

Soon after the bombs stopped falling on Kabul, award-winning journalist and women's rights activist Ann Jones set out for the shattered city. This is her trenchant report from the city where she spent the next four winters working in humanitarian aid. Investigating the city's prison for women, retraining Kabul's long-silenced English teachers, Jones enters the lives of everyday women and men and reveals through small events some big disjunctions.

Antonio Giustozzi, ed. *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (2009)

Analyzes the new Taliban as it expands, from the mature south, to the southeast, where they struggle to penetrate, from the west and northeast, now in the initial stages of infiltration, to the provinces surrounding Kabul, which have been unexpectedly and quickly occupied. Reviews current theories for defeating the strategies and propaganda of the new Taliban. Issues covered include the strengths and weaknesses of the organization; the nature of its networks and whether they are based on traditional ties of kin and ethnicity or more institutional chains of command; its success at maintaining unity; the consequences of unruly leaders and conflicts over rule; the group's exploitation of the opium trade; the factors that have contributed to a resurgence in Kabul; and the extent to which Taliban leaders have imposed strategy among the rank and file.

Gretchen Peters. *Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2010)

Within a realm of poor governance and widespread state corruption, anti-state actors engage in and protect organized crime—mainly smuggling, extortion and kidnapping—both to raise funds and also to spread fear and insecurity, thus slowing the pace of development and frustrating attempts to extend the rule of law and establish a sustainable licit economy. Militant groups on either side of the frontier function like a broad network of criminal gangs, in terms of the activities in which they engage, the way they are organized, how funds flow through their command chains and how they interact—and sometimes fight—with each other.

Abdul Salam Zaeef. *My Life with the Taliban* (2010)

Autobiography of senior former member of the Taliban. Zaeef describes growing up in rural poverty in Kandahar province. Both of his parents died at an early age, and the Russian invasion of 1979 forced him to flee to Pakistan. He started fighting the jihad in 1983. Zaeef was one among the former mujahidin who were closely involved in the discussions that led to the emergence of the Taliban, in 1994. Zaeef then details his Taliban career as minister who negotiated with foreign oil companies as well as with Afghanistan's own resistance leader. Zaeef was ambassador to Pakistan at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

Articles, Studies

Anna Badkhen, "Spring in Afghanistan," Weekly, *Foreign Policy.com*, beginning March 9, 2011:

("Cold and Violent": http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/09/cold_and_violent)

("The Tale of Forty Maidens":

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/15/the_tale_of_forty_maidens)

"Afghanistan Transition: Dangers of a Summer Drawdown" (Internatl Council on Secy and Development, February 2011): <http://www.icosgroup.net/2011/report/drawing-down-will-jeopardise-security/>

Looks at the current dynamics in Kandahar and Helmand. Progress at the military level will hopefully enable improvement in the fields of aid, development, governance and counter-narcotics. Without that, the military gains will be undermined. The urgent needs of people displaced by the fighting, the chronic grinding poverty and unemployment, and the grassroots political dynamics are not being addressed. Dramatic rises in the farm-gate opium price may also have serious consequences: the insurgency may stand to gain from and more farmers could be drawn into poppy farming. As a response to the pressures of the surge, the Taliban are adapting. The road networks of the south are still compromised, which both impedes commercial activity in and affects the overall security dynamics. There are often-voiced fears that in the face of the Taliban offensives, the Afghan police and army will be unable to hold the districts which have been cleared.

"Afghanistan's Elections Stalemate" (ICG, Asia Briefing N°117, 23 Feb 2011):

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/B117-afghanistans-elections-stalemate.aspx>

The prolonged crisis over Afghanistan's parliamentary elections has further undermined President Hamid Karzai's credibility. The Wolesi Jirga was inaugurated on 26 January 2011, following a lengthy standoff that exposed sharp political fault lines, which could plunge the country deeper into not just political but armed conflict. Clashes between the executive, legislature and judiciary over the results of the polls are paralyzing government. Constitutional review is long overdue, and failure to implement changes that reinforce the separation of powers will weaken the state's ability to provide security or good governance. If public confidence is to be restored, the president and Supreme Court must disband a special tribunal that was created to adjudicate elections complaints but lacks a clear legal mandate. The new parliament must also immediately place electoral and constitutional reform at the top of its agenda. If left unaddressed, the current political crisis will stoke ethnic tensions and could drive disenfranchised Afghans into the arms of the Taliban.

"Reforming Afghanistan's Broken Judiciary" (International Crisis Group, Asia Report N°195, 17 Nov 2010): <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/195-reforming-afghanistans-broken-judiciary.aspx>

Despite repeated pledges over the last nine years, the majority of Afghans still have little or no access to judicial institutions. Many courts are inoperable and those that do function are understaffed. Insecurity, lack of proper training and low salaries have driven many judges and prosecutors from their jobs. There is little evidence that the Afghan government has the resources or political will to tackle the challenge. A majority of Afghans have been forced to accept the rough justice of Taliban and criminal powerbrokers in areas beyond government control. The Afghan government and international community must make rule of law the primary pillar of a vigorous strategy that privileges the protection of rights equally to the protection of life. Restoration of judicial institutions must be at the front and centre of the strategy. International engagement restore the balance of powers in government and confronting abuses. Urgent action is also needed to realign international assistance to strengthen support for legal education, case management, data collection and legal aid.

“Afghanistan: Exit vs Engagement” (International Crisis Group, Asia Briefing N°115, 28 Nov 2010): <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/B115-afghanistan-exit-vs-engagement.aspx>

“A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army” (International Crisis Group, Asia Report N°190, 12 May 2010): <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/190-a-force-in-fragments-reconstituting-the-afghan-national-army.aspx>

There is little agreement between the Afghan government and its international backers on what kind of army the country needs, how to build it or which elements of the insurgency the Afghan army should be fighting. Persistent structural flaws have undermined the military's ability to operate independently. Ethnic frictions and political factionalism have also stunted the army's growth. As a result, the army is a fragmented force. There is a strong need to strengthen civilian input into military development, confront corruption and factionalism and place sustainability at the forefront of Afghanistan's national security strategy. The push to build a national military in service of a civilian government has frequently clashed with tendency to create militias in a bid to insulate the state from internal and external threats. ANA development and deployment have dragged under these tensions as well as patchwork command structures, with little coordination between NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), U.S. forces and the MOD in the early years of army development.

Caroline A. Hartzell, “Missed Opportunities: The Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan,” USIP Special Report 270, April 2011: http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR270-Missed_Opportunities.pdf

This report reviews the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in Afghanistan, assessing the extent to which the DDR program met its goals and the effect this had on security sector reform (SSR). The report also focuses on the international community's failure to include DDR as part of the initial power-sharing settlement embodied in the Bonn Agreement, the implications this posed for rival groups' security, and the effects this had on both DDR and SSR.

“Willing Entrepreneurs: Supporting Private-Sector Growth in the Afghan Economy.” Center for New American Security, November 2010: http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_Kauffman_Entrepreneurs_CusackMalmstrom.pdf

This paper's goal was to understand the narratives, challenges and opportunities of Afghan business people in order to inform a more effective strategy to empower them.

Khibar Rassul, “Fractured Relationships: Understanding Conflict between Nomadic and Settled Communities in Wardak's Pastureland,” Cooperation for Peace and Unity, October 2010: http://www.cpau.org.af/Research/Docs_our_publications/CPAU%20Report%20-%20Fractured%20Relationships.pdf

Highlights vulnerabilities among nomadic and settled communities as enabling conflict and violence, examining recent measures to remedy conflict and suggesting potential ways forward.

“Afghan Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption: a National Survey 2010,” Kabul: Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010: <http://www.iwaweb.org/src/IWA%20corruption%20survey%202010.pdf>

Survey conducted at end of 2009 in 32 provinces of Afghanistan. Covered 6,500 respondents, a representative sample of the overall population of Afghanistan, assessing the impact of corruption on the relationship between Afghan citizens and the state, trust in state and non-state institutions, the perceived support of the international community for anti-corruption efforts and the links of corruption with insurgency and conflict.

Ingrid Macdonald, “Afghanistan’s Reintegration Challenges: Land and Housing,” Norwegian Peacebuilding Centre, May 2010:

Afghanistan’s decades of conflict have forced a third of the population from homes, land and country. Today, many face major problems reintegrating back into society. Two key problems are the lack of access to land and adequate housing. The flaws of Afghanistan’s legal systems and land allocation scheme mean that progress in delivering results on the scale needed has been limited.

N Coburn, J Dempsey, “Informal Dispute Resolution in Afghanistan,” *USIP Special Report 247*, Aug 2010

Faced with difficulties in rule of law and the predominance of informal justice mechanisms, the Afghan government and international community have focused on engaging informal justice systems to resolve disputes. They are generally based upon restorative justice and communal harmony. They currently resolve the vast majority of legal disputes in the country. Engagement with informal systems and linking such systems to state institutions present opportunities for resolving conflicts and increasing access to justice.

Amin Tarzi, “Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program.” *Prism* 1:4 (Sept 2010):

http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/prism1-4/Prism_67-78_Tarzi.pdf

Reintegration and reconciliation are key to conducting a successful counterinsurgency. Reintegration focuses on individuals within enemy ranks who can be incentivized to abandon their allegiance to the cause; reconciliation offers amnesty and political position to enemy leadership to bring them into the fold. Various local and international promoters of reconciliation often undermine each other’s efforts and confuse their target audiences—the Afghan people and insurgents—emboldening an otherwise fragmented enemy and forcing a large segment of Afghans to seek alternative measures for their future safety. A critical eye on the past and frank discussions with senior Afghan government officials should elucidate the present and offer lessons learned and insights into how to realize national reconciliation.

Kaja Borchgrevink & Kristian Berg Harpviken, “Teaching Religion, Taming Rebellion? Religious Education Reform in Afghanistan,” Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), July 2010:

Afghanistan’s ‘madrasa sector’ features a range of religious education at different levels. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the term ‘madrasa’ is commonly used to refer to schools providing religious education at secondary-school level or higher; the term is based on the Ara-bic root ‘darasa’, which means ‘to study’. These institutions educate children in the basic tenets of their religion, train the lower-level clergy, and qualify religious scholars and legal experts. The growing insurgency in Afghanistan – and particularly the increase in the use of suicide attacks, coupled with the recruitment of Afghan religious students from Pakistani madrasas to the Taliban – has brought the topic of religious education to the centre of the Afghan state-building agenda. In response, the Afghan government has initiated a comprehensive reform of the Islamic education sector.

Jean Marie McGloin and David Kirk, “An Overview of Social Network Analysis,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 21:2 (2010): http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/773379__920938607.pdf

Social network analysis refers to a set of analytic tools that enable the study of these social relations. This article provides an introduction to concepts of basic social network concepts and techniques, as well as a discussion about the conditions under which this form of analysis may be particularly useful.

Major Daniel M. Maloney. “Security Assistance From the Logistics Point of View,” *Army Sustainment* 43:2, March-April 2011: http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/security_assistance.html

Major Kerry Dennard, Major Christine A. Haffey, and Major Ray Ferguson. "45th Sustainment Brigade: Supply Distribution in Afghanistan," *Army Sustainment* 42:6, Nov-Dec 2010: http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/NovDec10/45th_supplydistrib.html

Afghanistan is not Iraq. Soldiers deploying to Afghanistan should not try to impose what they learned and experienced in Iraq in Afghanistan. That is a common misconception among most new officers and noncommissioned officers arriving in the theater. The terrain and climate in Afghanistan make it one of the most logistically challenging environments in the world. And everything moves much slower in Afghanistan, so everyone deployed there must be patient.

Maj M.F. Hammond, "Logistics Training and Advisory Teams: A Concept in the Making," *Army Sustainment*, 42:2, Mar-Apr 2010: http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/MarApr10/ltat_concept.html

W-2 J. Price, "Logistics Partnering Lessons," *Army Sustainment* 42: 2, Mar-Apr 2010: http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/MarApr10/partner_lessons.html

While deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 07–09, the logistics training and advisory team (LTAT) of the 47th Forward Support Battalion (FSB) "Modern Pioneers," 2d Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, executed numerous partnership events. The 47th FSB (now the 47th Brigade Support Battalion) was tasked with the mission of training and mentoring the 9th and 17th Iraqi Army (IA) Divisions on logistics. The objective was to teach a method of self-reliance that would enable the Iraqi logisticians to sustain and equip their army.

LTC C.J. Whittaker, "Starting a Partnership thru Logistics Key Leader Engagement," *Army Sustainment* 42:2, Mar-Apr 2010: http://www.alu.army.mil/alog/issues/MarApr10/keyleader_partner.html

The challenge in key leader engagements is to build trust first, then consensus. I used a variety of techniques to gain that trust and friendship, and they had varying results and levels of success. Each key leader had a different leadership style that affected how he conducted business. The true art was to switch styles multiple times during a visit in order to interact and aggressively partner while not simply giving the Iraqis supplies.

VanVactor, Donovan, Dinh-Truong, "Medical Logistics at the Salang Pass Avalanche," *Army Sustainment* 43:1, Jan-Feb 2011: http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/JanFeb11/medlog_salang.html

The MEDLOG company's leaders identified actions that could be taken to improve operations should they be faced with a future incident of this kind. Primarily, areas identified for improvement were directed toward communication and supply chain control.

LTC Christophe Barbe, "A French Logistics OMLT in Afghanistan," *Army Sustainment* 43:2, March-April 2011: http://www.alu.army.mil/alog/french_logistics.html

The French Transportation Corps has experience in establishing logistics battalions by building mission-tailored units out of various specialties, but the operational mentor and liaison team (OMLT) concept is new. The concept is based on military assistance missions that were carried out in Africa, and today the OMLT is the key element in gradually bringing the ANA to independence in security tasks.